

A Short Account of the KUKAS
or
NAMDHARIES

(Torch-bearers of India's Freedom Struggle)

Condensed from
NAMDHARI ITIHAS (Hindi)
By **Sardar Nahar Singh M.A.**

The Truth is that it is not possible for a Kuka to be a loyal subject of the British Government.

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BHAINI SAHIB AND SATGURU PARTAP SINGHJI MAHARAJ

Extract from an article by Shri K.M. Munshi-Ex-Cabinet Minister, Govt. of India. Ex. Governor of U.P. and Bombay Province published in the Social Welfare dated 4th Dec. 1941.

I. A Vedic Ashram; a long stretch of green fields with a cluster of old, beautiful trees in the middle; ample-uddered, sturdy cows browsing under the trees, mud huts tenanted by tall men with long flowing beards and hardy, fine-looking women, a simple hardy race clad in Khaddar, laughing, full of courtesy and welcome. In the centre of the clump of trees, a large Katcha built hall of prayer covered by a thatched roof from which prayerful music rises from early dawn wafting the graceful cadence of Mantric chants. Long white-bearded priests sitting round sacrificial fire offering ghee. The sacrificial fire rising in spirals to the sky, like the soul of men in search of Divine.And such was the Ashram I saw with my own eyes in the evening of November 1, 1941, sixteen miles away from Ludhiana. The place is called Bhaini Sahib, where lives Sadguru Maharaj Partap Singhji of the Namdhari Sikhs.

It is a moonlit night when I reached there. The illusion is complete. I cannot believe that the sequestered spot whereupon has descended the repose and beauty of a Vedic night can be found in a village in the twentieth century Punjab.

The Guru, a wonderful personality, clad in clean white Khadar with a rosary of wool might have stepped out of Rig Veda Samhita. Tall and grave of mien is this man, with a smile that makes you happy, and a humility born of a lifelong desire to serve his community. He holds undisputed sway over seven lakhs of Namdharis, for, to them his word is the

(Contd. on cover p. 3)



Sat Guru Partap Singh ji Maharaj

FOREWORD

The Namdhari Sikhs known as *Kukas* in the political annals of India are rightly called the "Torch bearers of Indias' Freedom struggle". As Pathfinders of political liberty from the bondage of the Imperialist British masters of India, they hold a unique place in the resistance movement. The members of the sect from the very inception are ordained and pledged to follow the multiple cult of political freedom, "*Panchayati Raj*", combined with moral upliftment, social emancipation, and physical rejuvenation. The aims of the ingenious architect of this utilitarian socio-political edifice was to produce men of high moral character gifted with patriotic feelings ready to sacrifice their all for the sake of truth, righteousness and Motherland.

The founder Guru Ram Singh had witnessed the ruination of the Sovereign state of the Punjab with his own eyes. He had studied at close quarters and on the spot, the causes of its downfall. He had reached the conclusion, that men of high moral character only can win back freedom from the British.

In April 1857, one month before the first shot of the misnamed Indian mutiny was fired, Guru Ram Singh had raised high the Triangular white flag of Indian Independence at Bhaini Sahib his native village in Ludhiana district. The gathering was called for a specific purpose and with a particular aim. It was attended by typical village-dwellers,

of the surrounding area; toiling peasants, field labourers, tailors, carpenters, workers in leather and, the so-called untouchables—the real backbone of Indian masses. None of them was rich. They were honest, and hardworking simple village-folks. Beside his sermon on the religious and moral teachings, he enunciated his political programme of Swadeshi, complete Non-co-operation with the foreign rulers, and Boycott of foreign-made goods. All were exhorted to follow these injunctions and programme with an ultimate aim of achieving Freedom and establishing Panchayti Raj.

The Namdharies have a unique and distinct record of sacrifices made, and services rendered in the cause of Indian freedom. From 14th April 1857 to 14th August 1947, they strictly followed the cult of Swadeshi, Non-co-operation and Boycott. Guru Ram Singh and his 11 chief local organisers called Subahs were arrested and detained under the Bengal Regulation III of 1818 in January 1872. They were kept as State prisoners for indefinite period in different jails at Rangoon, Moulmein and Mergui in Burmah, Aden port, a British possession in the Arabian peninsula beyond the Arabian sea, Hazaribagh Jail, Chunar and Asirgarh forts. Later on Baba Gurcharan Singh was arrested and detained in Multan Jail as a most dangerous Namdhari who had been carrying on intrigues with the Russians against the British. In the year 1881, the number of Kuka State prisoners detained under Bengal Regulation III of 1818 was 14, out of nearly 80, in whole of British India. Some of them died in jails. A few were released, when they had become too weak and emaciated under the rigours of solitary jail life. The spirit of patriotism infused into

the minds of the Namdharies by Guru Ram Singh debarred them from appealing to the sense of justice of their foreign masters. They did not ask for mercy nor were they given one. Like a wounded deer chased by blood-thirsty hounds, the Namdharies licked their wounds for the little intervals, when the hounds lost the trail. The British officers, their Indian stooges, princes and bootlickers, took pleasure in condemning them as rebels fit to be hanged at first sight. The Namdharies suffered sorrows in silence. They did not utter any cries of pain or disappointment. They were always ready for receiving the whip of the tyrant on the back and dagger at the throat.

The headquarters of the Namdharies; the succeeding Guru Hari Singhji, his wife and his sons were under the strict watch of the policeman stationed at the entrance of his residential house. The inmates of the house were searched each time they went out and came in. The present Guru, Partap Singhji Maharaj, and his younger brothers were born in this state of semi-captivity.

In the year 1919, the Namdharies as a class joined the Swadeshi, Non-co-operation and Boycott programme of Mahatma Gandhi. They entered the Congress en mass, by the orders of the present Guru Maharaj Partap Singhji.

At the time of the historical session of the Indian National Congress at Lahore in 1929, the Namdharies openly cooperated with the National Movement of the country and stead-fastly carried out the decisions made there.

With the fuller awakenings of political consciousness in India in the twenties the leaders of National Movement, became attracted towards the Namdhari political ideology which had the genesis of great and effective consequences in its basic principles.

Doctor Shri Rajindar Prassadji paid a visit to Bhaini Sahib in the twenties. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Premier and one of the greatest men of the world of today, visited Bhaini Sahib twice in the years 1935 and 1953. Since 1919, the words 'Namdhari' and 'Congress' had become co-terminus and synonymous. In all political elections, in which the Congress took part since 1919, the Namdharis supported the Congress candidates.

The noble and superhuman part played by the Namdharis during the darkest days of Punjab history after the partition, in the year 1947, forms a solitary chapter, full of virtuous deeds, worthy of angles, in such circumstances and under such conditions of life. Not a single Namdhari besmeared the fair name of his sect by following the evil ways of killing muslims, looting and destroying the evacuee property and, abduction of muslim women. Guru Partap Singh ji Maharaj had emphatically ordered the Namdharis to desist from such evil actions, under threat of invoking God's curse on all such persons and also expulsion from the Namdhari organisation. No other organisation in India or Pakistan, can claim or boast of keeping its members under such a rigid control.

"According to the belief of the Namdharis battle of freedom is not yet over. The outer wounds have been healed.

leaving ugly scars. The inner cancers throwing up poisonous virus and retarding the production of balanced growth of economic, social and political life, are still there." During the last nine years of freedom, the Namdharies have been recuperating themselves from the exhaustion and fatigue caused by the wheel of repression so mercilessly driven over them by the British rulers. As a class, they have again girded up their loins for the selfless service of the Motherland—Bharat.

Editor

Narrative.

The master-planner of the Namdhari movement Shri Guru Ram Singh was born in a small village Bhaini in Ludhiana district of the Punjab on the Basant Panchmi day of the year 1816 A.D. He came of a family of poor, honest, hardworking and God-loving peasants engaged in agriculture. His father was Jassa who ran a carpenter's workshop, where the village peasants got their agricultural implements made and repaired.

As a youngman of tender age he used to graze cows along with other boys of the village. He developed love for cattle as well as his comrades. His mother Sada Kaur by name was a pious woman and taught him the daily prayer of Sikh religion. He began to say his daily prayers regularly before the age of ten. At the age of 12, he assisted his father in the fields, handled the plough, and performed manual labour.

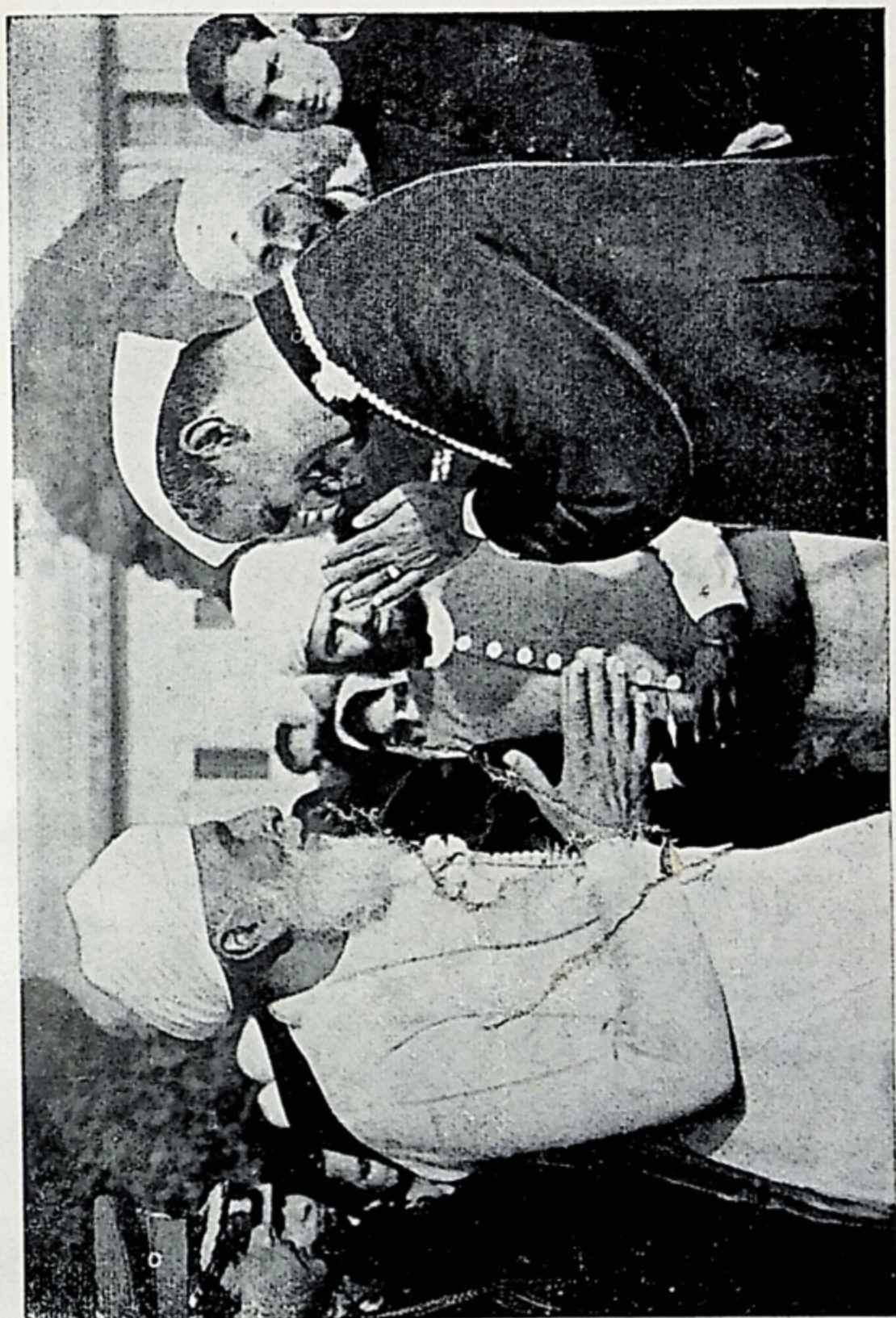
At the age of 20, Guru Ram Singh joined the ranks of the Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of the Independent Punjab, in the Artillery regiment. On one occasion probably during the first Anglo-Afghan war when his regiment was on duty in Peshawar area, he along with his other colleagues visited Guru Balak Singh at Hazro. Guru Balak Singh was much impressed with him, and permitted him to teach and spread the Gospel of Sikh religion.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the year 1839, chaos and anarchy spread at the court. In a short

period of 5 years, 2 rulers were killed, 3 ministers were murdered and several nobles of the court lost their lives. The Army became the virtual Dictator. The promises of enhanced pay and rewards, by the unscrupulous court magnets, brought political ruin and moral degradation.

Almost everyone who had wealth, power, or influence, thought for himself and none for the State. Guru Ram Singh felt exasperated, and foresaw the ruin and extinction of the State. He openly condemned the leaders as well the soldiery for their suicidal activities. He forbode the coming destruction and annihilation attendant on their doings. Several times he was punished by his superior officers for his open accusation of men in power. On the eve of the First Anglo-Sikh war in December 1845, he informed his colleagues, that nothing but ruin awaited the Lahore Army on the banks of Sutlej. His solitary voice remained unheard. In utter disgust and dismay, he threw his musket in the river on the night before the battle of Mudkee and left for his home. Treachery and diplomacy rather than military tact and bravery on the field of battle, brought victory to the British. The Punjab laid prostrate at the feet of the foreigners.

As a result of this war, Kashmir was sold by the British to Maharaja Gulab Singh in exchange for the War indemnity. The political connections of Kashmir State were directly established with the British Governor General of India. The Russian advance in Turkistan was to be checked on the northern slopes of India's natural barriers i.e. the mountains of Kashmir. The second Anglo-Sikh war of 1849 was fomented by the British



Satguru Partap Singh ji Maharaj blessing the Rashtrapati of India after Independence



diplomacy Maharaja. Dalip Singh, the minor son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was deposed, and sent to England as a political pensioner. The Punjab became a part of the British Empire in India. The prophecy, which Guru Ram Singh had made 4 years ago, became true.

Guru Ram Singh engaged himself in agriculture on his return from the Army. A shop was opened in the village for supplying the needs of the village folks of the surrounding area. Dealings in grain and cattle were also carried. A few sincere admirers and old comrades of the army service days, gathered around him, and shed bitter tears over the political thralldom of motherland. After careful consideration, a comprehensive programme was chalked out by Guru Ram Singh. It was proclaimed in the gathering called for this purpose on the 13th and 14th April 1857.

The basic principles of the movement in the words of Shri Doctor Rajinder Prasadji, the present Rashtrapati of India, as given in an article published in 'Satyug, March 1935, were as follows.

"Guru Ram Singh believed the political freedom as part of religion. The organisation of the Namdharis became considerably strong. The movement of Boycott and Non-co-operation, which Mahatma Gandhi started so vigorously in our own times, was preached by Guru Ram Singh fifty years ago, as a cult, for the Namdharis."

"Guru Ram Singh's Non-co-operation movement contained the following five essentials :—

1. Boycott of Government Services.
2. Boycott of educational institutions opened by the British.
3. Boycott of Law courts started by the British.
4. Boycott of foreign-made goods.
5. To refuse to obey and resist the laws and orders, which one's conscience abhors."

It was after six years, that the British officers came to know of the existence of this movement. By that time, the number of Namdharies had considerably increased throughout the Punjab, Punjab States, and other places in India.

At a gathering of the Namdharies held at Amritsar in April 1863, it was decided to simplify the prevalent, intricate and expensive custom of marriage among Hindus and Sikhs. It was also decided to perform marriages between different castes. A big gathering was held on 4th June, 1863 at village Khote in the Ferozepore district, at the house of an influential cultivator Samund Singh by name, and 'Anand' marriages were performed.

By this time, Government of the Punjab and the Lieut-Governor had become alarmed to know, that Guru Ram Singh was organising the peasants and the village-dwellers for political purpose under the garb of religious propagation. The Lieut-Governor on receiving the report of the Khote gathering ordered the Deputy Commissioner to proceed to village Khote at once and stop Guru Ram Singh from preaching sedition, and if desirable, put him under arrest. The Deputy Commissioner reached the spot

and announced that "the Namdharies cannot make any gathering or hold meetings in the Ferozepore district". Guru Ram Singh and his followers were taken to Bhaini Sahib under police guard. The Deputy Commissioner of the Ludhiana district announced to Guru Ram Singh on the 2nd July, an order of the Punjab Government; according to which he was interned at his village Bhaini for an indefinite period. The gatherings and the meetings of the Namdharies throughout the Punjab were banned. The police officers were ordered to keep strict watch over the movements of the members of the sect.

The Namdharies on the other hand, were not made of the ordinary stuff. They had steel in their souls. They were pledged to do and die. They invented and perfected their own system of sending and receiving messages, letters, and orders, from and to their Central Headquarters. They surveyed their own routes of communication from one place to another. They made contacts in far-flung places. By the year 1871, the Namdharies had put up their activity centres at Gwalior, Benaras, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Haripur Hazara, Peshawar, Kabul, Nepal, Bhutan and Kashmir. They had also contacted and formed friendships with the Maharaja of Nepal, the Maharaja of Kashmir, and the Dev Raja of Bhutan. In Nepal, the Namdhari representatives met Nand Ram, the Punjabi Rajput, who had played a conspicuous part during the Mutiny of 1857, and was thus given the name of General by his comrades. In the year 1871, the British Government sent its secret agent, Raja Shivraj Singh, of Kashipur to Nepal to find out the whereabouts of the Indian rebels residing in Nepal. On his return to India, Raja Sahib

reported, that he had met and talked to Kirpal Singh Kuka, and had also met the younger brother of Tantiya Topee, but he could not find any trace about Nana Sahib and Kishan Singh Kuka. By 1872, a well-knit organisation with secret cells and activity Centres was working in full swing, in Peshawar, Kabul, Haripur Hazara, and the Russian Turkistan, through Suba Gurcharan Singh.

II

Kine-killing in the Punjab. and the Namdharies.

After the first Anglo-Sikh war, a British Resident was appointed to assist the administration of the truncated Punjab under Maharaja Dalip Singh, a minor son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In a short time, the Resident became the virtual ruler. British diplomacy acted in a vicious circle. Bitter feelings were created between the nobles of the court. Intrigues were fomented and the courtiers formed themselves into groups and factions. The British soldiers were too impudent to respect the sentiments of the Sikhs, whom they now took as their conquered subjects. The Sikhs, in general, resented the attitude of the British soldiers, towards them. In order to allay bad feelings spreading against the British, a copper plate engraved with the following orders under the signature of the Resident, Henry M. Lawrence, was stuck on the main gate of the Golden Temple Amritsar—the chief Sikh shrine.

"The Priests of Amritsar having complained of annoyances, this is to make known to all concerned that by order of the Governor-General, British subjects are forbidden to enter the temple (called the Darbar) or its precincts, at Amritsar, or indeed, any temple, with their shoes on.

Kine are not to be killed at Amritsar, nor are the Sikhs to be molested or in any way interfered with.

Shoes are to be taken off at the Bhoongas at the corner of the tank. No person is to walk round the tank with his shoes on.

Lahore,

(Sd.) Henry M. Lawrence,

March 24th, 1847.

Resident."

From the nature of the order, it is clear that the British subjects, popularly known as Whites or Feringhees, used to enter the Golden Temple and its precincts with their shoes on. Cows were slaughtered at Amritsar for beef-eating British soldiers. The order was issued when Maharaja Dalip Singh was still on the throne of the Lahore Darbar.

The second Anglo-Sikh war was forced upon the Lahore Darbar by the British statesmen, in pursuance of their policy for reaching nearer the border of the Russians in Central Asia. The Sikhs were defeated in several battles. Maharaja Dalip Singh was dethroned. Punjab was annexed to the British Indian Empire on the 29th March 1849. According to circular letter No. 3, dated 5th May 1849, of the Board of Administration prohibition on cow-slaughter

was lifted. Some of the Deputy Commissioners requested for more clarification of these instructions, objecting to the practice of openly killing cows and selling of beef by the Mohammadans. One of them even argued that such a privilege will certainly be misused by the Mohammadans to annoy and injure the religious feelings of their Hindu and Sikh neighbours.

The British were anxious to consolidate their power in the Punjab. They adopted the policy of dividing the population on religious and communal bases. They wanted to bring the muslim masses nearer them. In pursuance of this policy, and in utter disregard of the old practices and sentiments of the Hindus and Sikhs, another order was issued by the Governor-General on the 20th May 1849, in the following words.

“No one should be allowed to interfere with the practice by his neighbour, and of customs which that neighbour’s religion either enjoins or permits.”

The order in clearer terms encouraged the muslims to practice cow-killing giving them the shelter of law, throughout the Punjab. The Board of Administration issued the following bye-laws regarding the slaughtering of cows.

1. Cows will be slaughtered at a particular place outside the town.
2. No shop will be opened in the town for the open sale of beef.

III

The Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, in consultation with Rai Takhat mal and other Hindu Panches (representatives) opened a slaughter-house outside the city. The butchers were insturcted to follow the following instructions. "The cows will be slaughtered at a particular place within an enclosure. No butcher shall bring beef inside the city for the purpose of sale. Transgressors of these rules will be punsihed".

The opening of a kine slaughter-house at Amritsar was a signal for the opening of many more in different towns throughout the Punjab. The butchers started the killing of cows in small towns too. Although the muslim population of the Punjab did not cherish beef as a food, the British officers again and again impressed upon their minds that the the right of kine-killing was sanctioned by their religion. The underlying motive was to divide the Punjabis into religious groups and to destroy their unity.

Since the starting of a slaughter-house at Amritsar, relations between the Hindus and Muslims of the city, have been growing tense. The muslim butchers started the sale of beef openly in the streets of Amritsar. On 7th May 1856, a culprit involved in such a crime was produced before Mr. F. Cooper. In May 1863, a Mulsim, selling beef in a street populated by the Hindus, was caught red-handed. The case was tried by two magistrates; one of them was a Hindu and the other a Muslim. The culprit was sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 50. The magistrates unanimously remarked that the sale of beef was

not permitted in the city. The Judicial Commissioner in his judgement on an appeal in this case, released the accused, saying that such an order did not exist in the Government records.

Every year such cases occurred, and the culprits were either released or fined nominally. By the year 1871, bitter feelings developed into altercations, quarrels, open fights and riots between Hindus and Muslims. In the month of May 1871, tension was on the peak. The Commissioner of the Division reached Amritsar. He held a meeting of the representatives of both sections of population and explained the Government's policy in regard to kine-killing. The Hindus and Sikhs of the city were disgusted over it. The Muslims became encouraged, and set afloat a rumour that four more shops will be opened in the city for the sale of beef. And that one of these will be adjacent to the precincts of the Holy tank of the Golden Temple. Muslims living in the city consumed beef in large quantity. Kites and crows finding small bones thrown after eating, picked these up and perching on some wall in the vicinity of the holy tank, left it there, after scratching. One such bone lying in the premises of the holy tank was picked up by Bhai Deva Singh who placed it before the sacred scripture in the Golden Temple on 24th April 1871. This caused very great excitement. Bhai Deva Singh was got arrested by Sardar Bahadur Mangal Singh Rangarhia—the Custodian Manager of the Golden Temple. He was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment and one month's solitary imprisonment. The non-muslims of the city became alarmed but felt helpless.

A few Namdharies living in the city in a meeting decided to sacrifice themselves for the purpose of stopping cow-killing in the sacred city. On the night of the 14th June, 8 Namdharies attacked the butchers inside the slaughter-house. Three butchers were killed on the spot and 3 were badly wounded. A special investigating officer, Mr. Christie arrested and challaned 12 Hindu and Sikh inhabitants of the city for these murders, by the 25th July. The innocent victims were made to give false statements and make confessions under torture and third degree police methods. On the 26th July the accused were committed to Sessions by the Deputy Commissioner. The news of the orders of the Deputy Commissioner reached Guru Ram Singhji at Bhaini. On coming to know the reality, he ordered the culprits to produce themselves before the magistrate and confess their guilt. On their own confession, 4 Namdharies were hanged on 15th September 1871. Similar murders of the butchers by the Namdharies had also taken place at Raikot in the Ludhiana district, on the 15th July 1871. Of the butchers, 4 were killed on the spot and 7 badly injured. In this case, 7 accused, 5 belonging to Nabha State and 2 to Patiala State were arrested with the help of the Maharajas of Patiala and Nabha. They were produced before a magistrate at village Bassian. An effort was made by the police to implicate and involve Guru Ram Singh as an instigator and abettor. He was summoned to appear before the magistrate at Bassian which he did. On the 5th August 1871, three of them were hanged at Raikot in the presence of a large gathering. The remaining two accused, Giani Rattan Singh and Rattan Singh of Naiwala involved in this case, were later on hanged at Ludhiana outside the jail premises, on 26th November 1871.

The Government, in the meantime, felt alarmed at the secret activities of the Namdharies. The two senior-most officers of the Punjab Government were ordered to prepare detailed reports regarding the Namdhari organisation, its aims, and its activities. Mr. Macnabb, in his long report dated 4th November 1871, reached the following conclusions.

"Whatever may have been the intentions of the leaders of the sect at the beginning, its tendency is distinctly political"...Many men of position are joining the sect... It seems necessary, for the internal safety and tranquility of the country, that Ram Singh be deported to some place, where he cannot be visited by his worshippers...I am strongly of the opinion, that the safest thing to do with Ram Singh is to transport him to the Andamans....If the Government prefer to act against him directly under Act III of 1818, it should be done at once".

Lt.-Colonel G. McAndrew in his memorandum dated 20th November 1871 wrote:—"It appears to me to be a case in which Government may fairly act without the usual course of elaborate legal procedure and as matter of general expediency and good government, send Ram Singh out of the country. He and his followers have now given most undoubted signs of a disposition to set all law and order at defiance".

The reports of the responsible officers of the Government sent a wave of fear and indignation in the minds of the British officers against the Kukas. They read the signs of a general revolution in the Country, organised and

headed by Satguru Ram Singh and his Namdhari followers. Some of them apprehended the shadows of 1857 Mutiny in the programme and activities of the sect. Nearly all of them were on the watch to find some opportunity to annihilate and crush the movement.

The open permission for kine-killing in the Punjab accorded to muslims by the British rulers was resented bitterly by all sections of the non-muslim population. Muslims, on the other hand became over-zealous everywhere and deliberately injured the religious sentiments of their Hindu and Sikh neighbours. An incident of a minor nature, in which a Namdhari had requested a vegetable seller to come down from the back of an ox, resulted in altercations between Gurmukh Singh Namdhari and a muslim at Malerkotla. The matter went to the court and the muslim judge instead of pacifying the excited feelings ordered that the ox be butchered before the eyes of Gurmukh Singh. Orders were instantly carried out. Next day Gurmukh Singh went to Bhaini Sahib to attend a gathering, and narrated what had taken place before his eyes.

On 13th January 1871, a batch of about 200 Namdharis under the leadership of Sardars Hira Singh and Lehna Singh started for Kotla to avenge the wrong done to one of their fellow religionists by the fanatic muslim judge. On the way, there was a free fight with the men of the Sikh Feudal Chief of Malaudh in which 2 Namdharis and two men of the Sardar group were killed. On the morning of 15th there was a riot between the Namdharis and the officials of the

Malerkotla State. Eight Kotla men were killed and several wounded. On the side of the Namdharies, 7 died on the spot, and 2 wounded were captured, besides, 29 severally wounded who had left the city. One of the two wounded died later on.

The Namdharies left the city and reaching the police post Sherpur in the Patiala State voluntarily surrendered themselves to the police officials. In the meantime, Mr. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana district, had reached Malerkotla. The ruler of the state was a minor and Mr. Cowan was working as superintendent of the Council of administration. He ordered that the Namdharies should be brought before him. On the 17th January, 49 of them were blown away with guns and the fiftieth cut to pieces with swords without trial. On the 18th, the remaining sixteen were also done to death in the same ghastly manner by an order of Mr. Forsyth, the Commissioner of Ambala Division.

"Kuka—Massacre at Maler-Kotla." "These reminiscences of 1872 would be incomplete without some reference to what I can only describe as the Massacre at Maler Kotla. ...For my part, I can recall nothing during my service in India, more revolting and shocking than these executions, and there were many who thought, as I did, still think, that the final orders of the Government of India were lamentably inadequate. (Indian and Home memories by Sir Henry Cotton. P. 110-113)

The Government took the occasion as affording an appropriate opportunity for exercising its absolute power for crushing the Namdhari movement. Guru Ram Singh

and his three Subahs, Jawahar Singh, Sahib Singh, and Lakha Singh and his personal attendant. Nanoo Singh, were put under arrest on the night of 17th and taken to Allahabad. Immediately after, Sahib Singh, Rur Singh, Kahn Singh, Barhma Singh, Maluk Singh, Man Singh and Hukma Singh were also arrested and sent to Allahabad. All of them were ordered to be kept in detention under Bengal Regulation III of 1818. Consequently, Guru Ram Singhji was taken to Rangoon in March 1872, along with his personal attendant, Nanoo Singh, and the Subahs were confined in different jails.

The wheel of repression against the Namdharies was set in motion in the Punjab as well as in Sikh States. Their Headquarter at Bhaini was raided. All able-bodied persons, numbering about two hundred residing there were taken to Ludhiana and sent to their respective districts. A strong police post was stationed at the main gate of the residential house of Guru Ram Singh. Namdharies were treated as members of a seditious party. They were ordered not to hold meetings. More than five Namdharies could not assemble at a place. The police officials and village headmen were ordered to keep a strict watch over the movements of Namdharies in their respective areas. Every Namdhari, when going out of his village to see his relatives or on some other important work, had to report himself to the headmen of both the places. The Namdharies had to seek the permission of authorities even in case of taking marriage parties from one village to another. For half a century the Namdharies bore all sorts of hardships and humiliations similingly.

They laughed at their oppressors, as men of faith and conviction always do. With all the power at its command the Government could neither break the high morale of the Namdharies, nor their well-knit organisation. No doubt, their number greatly decreased with the passing of years. The Maharaja of Patiala issued a Firman against the Namdharies, on 19th Jan. 1872.

Gnru Hari Singh, the younger brother of Guru Ram Singh controlled the affairs of the sect after his deportation. in 1872. He was not permitted to move out of Bhaini. He was a pious soul, who distributed alms and food freely. The Namdharies visited him secretly at the time when he came out of his guarded house, to answer the call of nature in a small jungle. He successfully carried out the arduous task and the responsibilities which his brother and Guru had entrusted to him, under the watchful vigilance of the police as well as the Government spies in the guise of Kukas living in the Dera.

He contacted the Russian authorities, in Russian Turkistan. The Namdhari emissaries, Baba Gurcharan Singh, who was well versed in Pashto and Persian languages, Shankar Rai, Maya and Budh Singh of Orenberg, acted as carriers of letters between Russians and Guru Ram Singh confined in Rangoon jail. The British officials were greatly perturbed, when the fact of the secret communication carried on between Russians and the Kukas, was revealed. Colonel Cavengri sent his secret agent to Central Asia to unearth the plot. Later on, Gurcharan Singh was arrested in 1880 and detained in Multan jail under Bengal Regulation III of

1818. Guru Ram Singh was removed from Rangoon to Mergui and kept under a heavy guard.

During the famine of 1881-82, Guru Hari Singh distributed free food to famine-stricken people, who had gathered in thousands at Bhaini. The British officers, in order to win and appease Namdharies and their Guru, offered to attach 2500 acres of land to his LANGAR, or free kitchen. Guru Hari Singh declined the offer saying "So long as God sends me grains, I will distribute free food to needy, and when there are no grains, I will also join the needy ones in their wanderings for food and try to procure it for them elsewhere".

For 21 years, Guru Hari Singh was not allowed to move out from his Headquarters, without the previous sanction of the Government. The sanction was given only on a few occasions.

Guru Hari Singh breathed his last in 1906 and was succeeded by the present Guru Partap Singhji Maharaj. During the First World War of 1914, the British Government once again tried to appease the Namdharies by offering vast landed grants to the present Guru and his followers, if he could only make a non-committal statement in favour of recruitment. The Government also offered to remove all restrictions on him and the Namdharies. The offers were declined scornfully.

At the time when the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, adopted the programme of Swedshi, Non-co-operation, and Boycott, the Namdharies joined the organisation en mass. The

Namdharies had been following such a programme since 1857. For all these years they have steadfastly stood by the Congress organisation sharing its sorrows, trials and ordeals, but not its gains.

Namdharies are strictly vegetarian in diet. Their women folk enjoy equal rights. They are enjoined upon to adhere to the cult of Swedeshi. They are strictly forbidden to enjoy luxuries of life. On marriage and other occasions in the family, no Namdhari is allowed to spend more than Rs. 13/-. In the matter of marriage they do not believe in caste restrictions. Men of all castes are permitted to join the Namdhari faith. Truthfulness, simplicity in thought and action, righteousness, adoption of fair and honest means for earning livelihood, giving one tenth of income in charity, helping the poor and needy; service of fellowbeings in distress, and willingness to make sacrifice for the sake of Motherland, are the main tenets of the Namdhari faith.

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word of God. In that community no one resorts to a court of law, the Guru's word is the final arbitrament. The Guru is the very image of refinement. His courtesy is not of the modern, artificial variety, but something genuine, emanating from an innate nobleness of mind and good breeding which a long line of cultured forefathers alone gives. Before his manners the best of modern manners looks insufficient, nude. Culture sits easy on him. He knows music and poetry, horses and cows, and quite a lot about modern affairs, national and international."

The Guru maintains a perpetual Sadavart, Langar, as it is called. Everyone who comes there is fed, does not matter who he is; for that were, said the Guru, the wishes of his Guru."

II. The Kukas are an orthodox sect of the sikhs. The principles of their teachings are monotheistic and moral. The tenets of their religion prohibit idol worship, and observance of the distinction of caste. They permit the marriage of widows, prohibit the receiving of money in lieu of a daughter or a sister, and enjoin morality and abstinence from the use of spirits and other intoxicating liquors. . .Mohammdans were permitted to become the members of the new sect.....Suspensions having been aroused, that the object of Ram Singh and his disciples were not merely religious, but that under the guise of a religious reformer and a teacher of moral precepts, he harboured deep political designs, the Guru was, for some years, detained under strict surveillance in his village.

(History of the Punjab by Mohammad Latif Pages 594-595 Published in 1891.)

III. A disciple and namesake of Ram Singh gave me the following list of virtues especially inculcated by his Guru. "Fear of God, faithfulness, purity, and cleanliness, truthfulness, benevolence, consciousness of Deity's presence, compassion, abstinence from covetness, abstinence from perjury, particular stress is laid on truthfulness, and it will, I think, be admitted that as a class, the Kukas are remarkable in this respect.

(Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal Part 1 Nos. i to iv---1869)

IV. There have since annexation been times, when the political feelings of the sikhs have been more or less disturbed, as they were, for instance in 1886; but there has not with one exception, been any serious organisation on the part of the sikhs against the constituted authorities on religious or

political grounds. The one exception alluded to is that caused by the now famous Kuka sect. Kukas; Hindu. 690, Sikhs 10541 Muslims 5.

The Kukas will often try to conceal the fact of their belonging to this sect.....I have allowed the five musalman Kukas to stand, having met a person who knows personally one of them, but I am unable to suggest what the form of faith by such an one may be".

(Census of India 1891. Volume XIX. The Punjab and its feudatories. The report on the census. By E.D. MacLagan. pages 168-171)

Ranjit Singh by Sir Lepol Griffin, K.C.S.I. Published at the Clarendon Press; 1892.

His Successor, a carpenter of the Ludhiana district, named Ram Singh, rose to considerable importance and attached to himself a large number of fanatical disciples known as Kukas, who were distinguished by a peculiar dress, secret watchwords, and political organization. The original movement was religious, an attempt to reform the Sikh practice and restore it to the character it possessed in the time of Govind Singh. As the sect grew in numbers, its ambition increased, till, at last, it preached a revival of the Khalsa and the downfall of the British Government. At this time I happened to be the Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, and the proceedings of the Kukas caused a great amount of anxiety and trouble. They were not, however, in spite of their seditious teaching interfered with until they broke into open revolt and attacked the Mohamaden Town of Maler Kotla near Ludhiana. The insurrection was put down with great severity and some fifty of the rebels were blown from guns after summary trial. At the same time all the Kuka leaders in different districts of the Punjab were arrested in one night and deported some to Rangoon, others to Aden, and the less important were confined in Punjab Jails. (Nahar Singh not fifty but sixty six—49 blown away with guns on 17th Jan. 1872 without trial and one cut down by swords, and sixteen others blown away with guns with summary trial on 18th Jan. 1872).